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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
29 May 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 5:00 P.M. EDT)

Saigon

1. The immolation of a Buddhist nun in the courtyard of the Buddhist Institute, on the evening of 29 May (Vietnam time), appears to have been staged with the complicity of the Buddhist leadership. Reports from US eyewitnesses indicate that the woman was assisted in the immolation by two unidentified men and that her charred body was subsequently re-lighted for the benefit of late arriving press photographers.

2. The immolation occurred shortly after the termination of a rally held by some 8,000 Buddhist supporters in the streets near the Institute. The demonstrators, who according to the US Embassy remained quiet and orderly throughout the rally, returned to the Buddhist Institute to greet Thich Tam Chau, who returned to Saigon this morning. Chau spent the afternoon at the Institute talking with small groups of followers. He told newsmen that he might have a statement to make on 30 May.

Hue - Da Nang

3. Major General Hoang Xuan Lam, commander of the 2nd ARVN Division in the southern section of I Corps, apparently will be named the new I Corps commander on 30 May. Lam, who reportedly is loyal to the Ky

State Department review completed

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government despite the fact that he has maintained good relations with General Thi, will be responsible only for military affairs. An as yet unnamed civilian has been selected as Governor Delegate for I Corps region. There is no information concerning any new assignment of General Cao, the current I Corps commander who has been refusing to leave the sanctuary of the US Marine headquarters in Da Nang.

4. At a news conference following this morning's immolation in Hue, Buddhist leader Tri Quang asserted that President Johnson would be held responsible for the nun's death unless US policy toward the Ky government changed. Claiming that a "militaristic dictatorship" was being established in South Vietnam whose purpose was the annihilation of Vietnamese Buddhism, Tri Quang sought to portray US support for the Saigon government as a hinderance to the struggle of the Vietnamese people against Communist aggression. He hinted at the possibility of further immolations.

5. The US consul in Hue reports that Colonel Khoa, chief of Thua Thien province, is planning to move his sector headquarters outside of town as a preliminary step to moving against struggle force elements. Khoa reportedly intends to get approval from I Corps headquarters for a move to "disable" the rebel-held radio in Hue and to organize counter-struggle demonstrations in Hue and outlying districts. Meanwhile, according to MACV, all military units with the exception of the 2nd battalion of the 3rd regiment have now left Hue for their normal areas of responsibility.

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